

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

# MSCP NEWS

Volume 2, Issue 3

July-August 2001

## SCIENTISTS ADVISE ON NORTH COUNTY MSCP PLAN

The MSCP and Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Programs prepared under the State of California NCCP Act share a common goal. This goal is to have a plan that represents the application of the best available scientific data and methodologies. This high level of scientific content is necessary to assure these plans adequately protect the species of plants and animals addressed by the plan and also stand up to legal scrutiny if such protection is challenged in Court. Since the adoption of the original MSCP, a requirement for independent scientific review has been amended into State law.

The County is preparing a North County subarea plan and is very anxious to assure that it meets the highest scientific standard. On May 3 and 4, the Department of Planning and Land Use hosted a group of Independent Science Advisors to assist in the preparation of the MSCP subarea plan for Northern San Diego County.

The advisors were presented with information on the landscape of the area included within the plan, the data available, and the components of the modeled information. They also participated in a field trip to Ramona to view particular issue areas. At the end of the meeting, the advisors presented their overall impression of the plan process and targeted some areas that could be enhanced or modified. They will formalize their comments in a written report to be presented in the fall. We are pleased to state that in general, they appeared very positively impressed with the process that is being used to create the plan, though they did suggest a number of modifications that would enhance the final results. Once their comment report is received, it will be used to modify the modeling process.



North County consultant, Pat Atchison, explains the modeling process.

An objective is to create a database and scientifically based preserve models for the North County. The County has contracted with AMEC, an environmental consulting group, and the Conservation Biology Institute to prepare this information. The Independent Science Advisors were assembled to “peer” review data and the components of the preserve models.

Regional habitat plans rely heavily on computer modeling including an emphasis on computer based mapping systems (Geographic Information Systems). One major reason for this is that it is not possible to gain access to all of the areas that would need to be field surveyed in order to evaluate the on-site resources. Another reason is that modeling is the most effective means to assess such a large and complex set of data.

At the completion of this “peer review” process, the County will conduct a Public Outreach Program beginning this fall where the modified maps will be available for public review and comment.

**MSCP WEBSITE SURVEY!!** The MSCP is in the process of redesigning our website!

Please give us your input by taking a few moments to fill out our survey at [www.sdcdplu.org](http://www.sdcdplu.org). Just click on “Multiple Species Conservation Program” and go from there. The survey will be available until July 31. Be sure to check back frequently for our new and improved site!!





## CARLSBAD FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE: PROGRESS AND CHANGE

In February, Jim Bartel replaced Ken Berg as the new Field Supervisor for the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office (CFWO) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Ken moved on to manage the Service's Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office in Lacey, Washington.

With a staff of more than 85 employees for an office that covers six counties in Southern California, CFWO works closely with federal, state, and local jurisdictions, private landowners, and developers in the implementation of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). The office also works with the California Department of Fish and Game in the implementation of the State of California's Natural Community Conservation Planning Act. In addition, CFWO deals with environmental contaminants issues and works to conserve Southern California's natural resources for future generations.



CFWO Staff supervising MSCP activities in San Diego County: (L-R) Nancy Gilbert, Susan Wynn, Jim Bartel, Patrice Ashfield, and Kathleen Brubaker

Jim Bartel began his 22-year career with the Service in 1979 as botanist for the Old Sacramento Endangered Species Office. He later was the Section 10 Coordinator and Deputy Assistant Field Supervisor for the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office. In 1991, Bartel was detailed to Washington D.C. as a staff member in the former House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, which oversaw the ESA and was involved with northern spotted owl issues. He later served as the Chief of the Listing and Recovery Division in the Portland Office before moving to Carlsbad in 1997 as the Assistant Field Supervisor for the northern portion of the office. With a botanical

background and graduate degree from Fresno State University, Bartel remains actively involved with botanical research and is now working with scientists from Baylor and Cornell Universities as well as researchers from Great Britain and China on a genetic study of the genus *Cupressus* (cypress) and its close allies.

Service biologist Nancy Gilbert, a 17-year CFWO veteran who has worked to protect Southern California's natural resources, was instrumental in helping to initiate, design, and implement the MSCP. In January 2000, Nancy was promoted from Division Chief for San Diego County to Assistant Field Supervisor. She is now responsible for projects in San Diego, eastern Riverside, and Imperial counties. Following in Nancy's footsteps, Susan Wynn has taken over as Division Chief with Patrice Ashfield and Kathleen Brubaker serving as Branch Chiefs for south and north San Diego County, respectively.

Since 1998 under the MSCP, the Service has:

- Acquired the Western Salt Works, an 800-acre site that will be the cornerstone of the South Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
- Extended the boundaries of the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge complex to include the San Miguel and McGinty Mesa areas. We have also staffed the complex with five refuge managers, three biologists, two law enforcement agents, two operation specialists, a fire crew, a bio-tech, a park aid, and an information and education specialist.
- Conducted surveys for the federally endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly, Light-footed clapper rail, Least Bell's vireo, Arroyo toad, and California least tern; the threatened Coastal California gnatcatcher and Western snowy plover; and the proposed endangered San Diego ambrosia. In addition, we have set up reptile and amphibian arrays, completed a Rufous-crowned sparrow edge effect study, conducted bird point count surveys, and surveyed Cactus Wren populations.

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## MEET THE NORTH COUNTY ADVISORS!

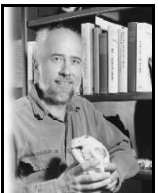


Independent Scientific Advisors listen intently as the modeling process is explained.

The scientific advisors working with the County are ten well-known and highly regarded specialists in their fields. Michael O'Connell from the Southern California office of The Nature Conservancy acts as facilitator. Mr. O'Connell has been involved in the preparation of a number of Habitat Conservation Plans throughout Southern California. The members of the group are as follows:



**Dr. Reed Noss** is acting as the preparer/editor of report that will summarize the Advisors' recommendations. Dr. Noss is nationally recognized as one of the foremost experts on conservation of biodiversity and has authored several books on the subject.



**Dr. Paul Beier** from Northern Arizona University is a noted researcher on the movements of large predators throughout Southern California. He has particular expertise in the area between the Palomar/Agua Tibia Mountains and the Santa Ana Mountains.



**David Faulkner** has been affiliated with the Entomology Department at the renowned San Diego Natural History Museum for 25 years. He has expertise on the rare and endangered insects in the region including the Quino checkerspot butterfly.



**Dr. Robert Fisher** is affiliated with the San Diego State University reserve system and USGS. He is well known in the region for performing groundbreaking research in the San Diego region on the utilization of habitats by reptiles and amphibians.



**Dr. Brian Foster** is a local ornithologist. Dr. Foster's specialty is the study of rare and endangered birds in the San Diego region.



**Dr. Thomas Griggs** an instructor at California State University Chico, has worked with vernal pool species for more than 25 years and was past preserve manager at the Santa Rosa Plateau. He has authored numerous articles on vernal pool habitats.



**Dr. Patrick Kelly** is an adjunct professor at California State University, Fresno and director of the Endangered Species Recovery Program. His specialty is small mammals.



**Jeff Opdycke** from the San Diego Zoo works in the area of conservation of local resources. He has a history of reviewing habitats from a regional perspective.



**Trish Smith** represents the field of preserve managers for The Nature Conservancy. She manages major habitat preserves in southern Orange County.



**Dr. Peter Stine** is a well-known computer modeling researcher who currently works with the Forest Service. He has a long history of research in Southern California and the San Diego region.

David Faulkner: SDNHM/photo by Bob Ross  
Western pond turtle: USGS/photo by Chris Brown  
California gnatcatcher: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/photo by Moose Peterson



**Stay tuned for the next issue of MSCP News!! It will include a comprehensive feature on the North County MSCP Plan as well as cover a variety of other new and exciting topics.**





## ARROYO SOUTHWESTERN TOAD



USGS/photo by Chris Brown

The Arroyo southwestern toad (*Bufo microscaphus californicus*) is a small, dark-spotted amphibian. Males range from 2. To 2.6 inches in length, while the slightly larger females range from 2.6 to 3.3 inches in length. Arroyo toads have light-olive green or gray to tan backs with dark spots and warty skin. A distinguishing feature is the light-colored, V-shaped stripe that crosses the head and eyelids of each individual.

Arroyo toads are endemic to the coastal plains and mountains of central and southern California and northwestern Baja California. They breed in stream channels and use stream terraces and surrounding uplands for foraging and wintering. Arroyo toad habi-

tats are favored sites for water storage reservoirs, flood control structures, roads, agriculture, urbanization, and recreational facilities such as campgrounds and off-highway vehicle parks. The resulting habitat loss is the main cause for the decline of the species. The loss of habitat, coupled with habitat modifications due to the manipulation of water levels in many California streams and rivers, as well as predation from introduced aquatic species, caused Arroyo toads to disappear from about 75 percent of their previously occupied habitat. Today, the Arroyo toad can be found in approximately 22 drainages and watersheds along the coast. Small populations can be found scattered throughout San Diego County, especially in the northwest region (i.e. Santa Margarita, San Onofre Creek and San Mateo Creek). Significant populations can also be found in the upper parts of San Diego and Sweetwater Rivers.

If humans aren't careful, alterations of Arroyo toad habitat may lead to the elimination of local populations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the Arroyo toad as an endangered species in December 1994. Since then, the USFWS has issued a recovery plan for the Arroyo toad. Its recovery objectives are to downlist the Arroyo toad to threatened status and eventually delist it.



Text source: U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. 1999. Arroyo southwestern toad (*Bufo microscaphus californicus*) recovery plan. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. vi + 119 pp.

## ORCUTT'S SPINEFLOWER



SDSU Field Station Programs

Orcutt's spineflower (*Chorizanthe orcuttiana* Parry), a tiny prostrate annual, with reddish stems that grow in a star pattern, can be found on loose, sandy soils that are associated with openings in coastal chaparral. The loss

of these soil types, due to urban and military development, is a key contributing factor to the rarity of the Orcutt's spineflower in San Diego. Another factor

that has limited its range is the invasion of the exotic weed *Carpobrotus edulis* (ice plant) that is severely degrading the species' habitat. Scientific examination of the latter problem is currently underway at the Soil Ecology Restoration Group (SERG) at San Diego State University. SERG's goal is to develop innovative methods to control ice plant, preventing it from causing further damage. They are conducting their research in two locations at Point Loma Naval Complex. Orcutt's spineflower can also be found at Oak Crest Park in the City of Encinitas. Former locations for this species include Torrey Pines State Park and in Kearny Mesa. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Orcutt's spineflower as an endangered plant species in October 1996. People seeking to catch a glimpse of this endangered species should be careful where they step. The Orcutt's spineflower is also threatened by foot traffic.





## EARTHFAIR 2001 A BIG SUCCESS!!

Thousands of people arrived at Balboa Park on Sunday, April 22, to celebrate Earth Day. San Diego Earthworks organized the festivities with its 12<sup>th</sup> annual EarthFair, the largest free environmental fair in the United States. The MSCP participated in the festivities as an exhibitor. Passersby were greeted with colorful stickers featuring some of San Diego's flora and fauna. Kids picked up bookmarks developed in partnership with San Diego County Library staff with titles of books about the environment available at local County libraries. Also available were the Earth Day edition of *MSCP News* as well as the *Living Close to Nature* brochure. Maps of the MSCP Plan and areas that have been preserved since the plan was approved were also set up, and MSCP staff members were on hand to answer questions. Overall, the day was a great success. The

public had a very positive response to the MSCP booth and many people were eager to learn more. The MSCP website mailbox is fully operational, and the MSCP would be glad to hear from you. Start by going to [www.sdcdplu.org](http://www.sdcdplu.org). Then click on the MSCP link!



## NWF HOSTS SMART GROWTH SYMPOSIUM

After the success of Earth Fair 2001, the MSCP prepared for another major event, a symposium entitled *Smart Growth for Californians and Wildlife: A Call to Action!* The symposium, hosted by the National Wildlife Federation and its California affiliate, the Planning and Conservation League, took place at the University of California, San Diego on May 19-20. The County of San Diego, through the support of County Supervisors Greg Cox and Pam Slater, was a major sponsor of this event. The two-day event attracted a crowd of approximately 300 individuals to discuss, debate, and deliberate over potential solutions to reverse the impact of sprawl development.



San Diego County  
Supervisor Pam Slater

Speakers and panelists included local, state and federal government officials, representatives from a variety of environmental and community organizations, business interests, and academics. San Diego County Supervisor Pam Slater welcomed participants and asked for assistance in solving the problems associated with the region's population and economic growth. Robert Copper, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, and Gary Pryor, Department of Planning and Land Use Director, served as panelists on the topics of habitat

conservation plans and general plans, respectively. Robert Asher, MSCP Division Chief, served as moderator during the discussion of local funding opportunities through Propositions 12 and 13. Other panels covered topics such as transportation funding and planning, California's energy crunch, and the impact of globalization on environmental sustainability in San Diego/Tijuana.



Gary Pryor, DPLU Director; Robert Copper,  
DCAO; Robert Asher, MSCP Division Chief

In addition to participating in the panels, the MSCP participated as an exhibitor. Maps of the MSCP Plan and areas that have been preserved since the Plan was approved were displayed. Various materials were distributed, including *MSCP News*, the *Living Close to Nature* brochure and habitat information sheets.

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- We are working jointly with our partners to develop management plans for Del Mar Mesa/ Carmel Mountain, South San Diego Bay, Otay-Sweetwater NWR, Crestridge, Rancho Jamul, and Boden Canyon.

Proactive habitat conservation planning -- like the MSCP -- will be the long-term key to the protection of San Diego's treasured biodiversity. Future generations may long forget how these precious natural resources were preserved, but will most definitely be thankful that they were.

**JUST IN...** The Service has just announced that Michael J. Spear, Manager of the California and Nevada Operations Office in Sacramento, retired after 28 years with the Service to pursue an opportunity as the State of California's Deputy Secretary for Land Conservation and Stewardship. Spear has been a visionary and strong advocate for biodiversity in California and has been involved with all aspects of regional habitat conservation planning for southern California. In his new position, Spear will be in charge of coordinating all land management and acquisition programs in California.

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Gary L. Pryor

**MSCP Division Chief**  
Robert E. Asher



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